

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

RQ-1L, S/N 96-3028

TUZLA AIR BASE, BOSNIA-HERZOGOVINA

30 MARCH 2001

On 30 March 2001, at 12:27 P.M. local time (1027 Zulu), an RQ-1L Predator unmanned aerial vehicle, serial number 96-3028, crashed one nautical mile north of the town of Brani-Do in Bosnia. The Predator, assigned to the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron, 57th Wing, Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, was supporting the Kosovo Stabilization Force. The mishap pilot and the mishap sensor operator, both from the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron, were remotely flying the aircraft from Tuzla Air Base. There were no injuries, fatalities, or significant property damage due to this mishap.

Shortly before the impact, the mishap aircraft pitched down and accelerated to 170 knots, due to pitot static system icing. When the mishap pilot recognized an icing problem, he failed to execute critical steps for pitot icing, namely to turn off the preprogram mode and the airspeed hold in sequence. Instead, he activated pitot heat to clear the ice blockage. As a result, when the ice melted, the mishap aircraft rapidly pitched up, likely causing the left wing to buckle and separate from the aircraft.

The primary cause of this mishap, supported by clear and convincing evidence, was the mishap pilot's failure to immediately execute critical checklist steps for pitot static icing. There is also substantial evidence that nonuse of the pitot static heating system was a substantially contributing factor in this mishap.

Under 10 U.S.C. 2254(d), any opinion of the accident investigators as to the cause of, or the factors contributing to, the accident set forth in the accident investigation report may not be considered as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding arising from an aircraft accident, nor may such information be considered an admission of liability by the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statements.